



Hypnosis in Spain (1888–1905): From spectacle to medical treatment of mediumship



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ABSTRACT

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, some Spanish physicians sought to legitimize hypnotherapy within medicine. At the same time, hypnotism was being popularized among the Spanish population through stage hypnosis shows. In order to extend the use of medical hypnotherapy, some physicians made efforts to demarcate the therapeutic use of hypnotic suggestion from its application for recreational purposes, as performed by stage hypnotists. However, in the eyes of some physicians, the first public session to legitimize hypnotherapy turned out to be a complete failure due to its similarities with a stage hypnosis performance. Apart from exploring this kind of hitherto little-known historical cases, we explore the role of spiritists in legitimizing medical hypnosis. At a time when Spanish citizens were still reluctant to accept hypnotherapy, the spiritists sponsored a charitable clinic where treatment using hypnosis was offered. We conclude that the clinic was effective in promoting the use of hypnotherapy, both among physicians as clinical practice, and as a medical treatment for patients from the less privileged classes of Spanish society.

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1. Introduction

During the second half of the 19th century, hypnotism became more and more popular in Europe, reaching a peak in August 1889 (see, for example: Ellenberger, 1976; Forrest, 1999; Gauld, 1992; López Piñero, 2002; Winter, 1998). That is when the First International Congress of Experimental and Therapeutic Hypnotism took place¹ (Bérillon, 1889). The physician Abdón Sánchez Herrero (1852–1904), a pioneer of hypnotherapy in Spain, attended the congress as a Spanish delegate and was elected to participate in the foundation of the Society for Hypnosis and Psychology (*Société d'Hypnologie et de Psychologie*). During the congress, a motion was also put forward to ban public demonstrations of hypnosis by non-medical professionals (Bérillon, 1889; Shamdasani, 2005).

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¹ The First International Congress of Physiological Psychology took place at the same time in Paris. One of the four sessions was devoted to hypnotism. The presentations and debates clearly showed the opposed positions of the Nancy School and of the Salpêtrière School (Plas, 2000).

According to Porter (1997), by the end of the 19th century, Britain and France had successfully marginalized the therapeutic use of hypnosis and suggestion by those practitioners who were viewed as quacks and lay healers. As Chettiar (2012) has shown, for the medical community in Britain the main concerns at that time were the social and moral implications derived from the medical use of suggestion; concern no longer centred on the use of hypnosis by lay practitioners. Thus, British medical hypnotists had different problems and interests from those of their colleagues in Germany and Spain, where the use of hypnosis and suggestion by lay practitioners had become a major issue; medical hypnosis was not yet accepted by the scientific community in those countries (Diéguez Gómez, 2003; González de Pablo, 2003; Wolfram, 2012).

As Wolfram (2012, 2009) has shown, German psychiatrists who tried to legitimize hypnotherapy, such as Albert Moll (1862–1939), needed not only to prove the clinical benefits of medical hypnosis, but also to demarcate their use from that of stage hypnotists and magnetic healers. In Spain, as we argue here, medical hypnotists, such as Ángel Pulido (1852–1932), found themselves in a similar situation. Like Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862–1929) in

Germany, Pulido (1888a) stressed that, in the hands of amateurs, hypnotism threatened both the moral and the physical health of Spanish citizens. Moreover, Wolfram (2012) has argued, strategies to legitimize hypnotherapy, such as self-policing and “sanitization”, were only likely to occur in countries where medical hypnotists felt threatened by lay healers. In Germany, those strategies did not work well due to the tendency of some physicians and psychiatrists, such as Schrenck-Notzing, to organize public demonstrations of hypnosis that were very similar to those of stage hypnotists (Wolfram, 2009, 2012). As we show below, this was also a major problem in Spain, where the first public demonstration that attempted to legitimize the clinical use of hypnotic suggestion was regarded by many physicians as a mere stage hypnosis show.

Historical research into how hypnotic methods started to be used and spread in Spain is scarce. Among studies of the history of hypnotism and magnetism, the most important are the works published by López Piñero (2002), González de Pablo (2013, 2006, 2003), Diéguez Gómez (2003), Huertas García-Alejo (2012, 1995), and López-Muñoz, Alamo, and Rubio (2008). Especially the work by González de Pablo and Diéguez Gómez laid the foundations for the history of medical hypnosis in Spain. Those authors show how Spanish physicians tried to legitimize hypnotism in the medical field, rightly pointing out the connections between hypnotism and spiritism.² At the time hypnotism and psychical research overlapped in general. In Germany, the overlap can easily be seen in the way psychological societies, such as the *Gesellschaft für Experimental-Psychologie* [Society of Experimental Psychology] in Berlin, under the leadership of the Max Dessoir, attempted to emulate the *Society for Psychical Research* in England (see, for example: Sommer, 2013). In Le Havre (France), Pierre Janet and Joseph Gibert's experiments on mental suggestion are another clear example of the interaction between psychic phenomena and hypnotism (see, for example: Plas, 2000). In Spain, Sánchez Herrero (1897) tried to repeat some of the Le Havre experiments, such as inducing trance at a distance in one of his patients (see, for example: González de Pablo, 2003).

Many Spanish Kardecian spiritist associations existed since the end of the nineteenth century. With its focus on charity, the movement had rapidly spread especially among the working class, fostered by an increasing anticlerical milieu (Horta, 2004). Charity was regarded by spiritists both as a solution to social ills and as a way to improve the soul. Spanish spiritist centres were actively involved in philanthropic projects of humanitarian aid such as collecting clothes for the poor or giving moral support to patients suffering in hospitals. Through a complex network of propaganda of their philanthropic labours, spiritists soon garnered support within the Spanish working class. Often in connexion with other collectives such as the anarchists and the masons, spiritism became one of the driving forces of social reform in Spain and promoted initiatives that were aimed at achieving social equality and progress (Abend, 2004; Horta, 2004; Mülberger, 2008). The charitable clinic

we deal with in this paper is a good example of this effort and of how spiritists achieved social impact.

Hypnosis and suggestion were often used in spiritist séances (Brower, 2010; Lachapelle, 2011). Kardec defined a type of mediums, called “sonambulic mediums”, whose occasional mediumship manifested itself only after the medium had been induced into a sonambulic sleep (Edelman, 2006a). In Spain, the spiritist leader José Fernández Colavida (1819–1888), known as “the Spanish Kardec”, hypnotized mediums to make them enter a state of trance and communicate with their spirit guides (Gimeno Eito, s.d.). Like most spiritists in the late nineteenth century, Fernández Colavida did not distinguish between hypnotism and animal magnetism; neither was there a clear division between the procedures of mesmerists and spiritists (Lamont, 2013). Some Spanish physicians regarded the spiritists' use of hypnosis as a danger for the hypnotized, and accused them of blurring the boundaries between medical and stage hypnosis (Diéguez Gómez, 2003). However, as we argue here, spiritists helped to demarcate the two uses of hypnosis by sponsoring the Hydro-Magnetic Clinic, a charitable institution where hypnotherapy was offered free of charge.

In this paper, our aim is to render new historical cases that offer a better understanding of how medical hypnotherapists tried to gain legitimacy, both within the scientific community and in Spanish society at large. The analysis of new historical sources permits us to exemplify the fundamental role of spiritists in the process of popularization and legitimization of medical hypnosis. We start by presenting the introduction of hypnotherapy into Spain, highlighting the main concerns of physicians at the time, and which types of patients it was considered this treatment could benefit. We then show how the first attempts to legitimize medical hypnosis in Spain failed, both in the eyes of some critical physicians and the lay public. Surprisingly, a better demarcation between medical and stage hypnosis was achieved by the charitable clinic sponsored by spiritists. After analysing this original historical case, we present the case of the “cure” of a medium carried out in that clinic. We argue that the spiritists' institutions and their commitment to charity, for the first time, facilitated access for the broader Spanish population to hypnotherapy and thereby contributed to the recognition of its clinical benefits. Thus, despite the similarities with the German case, the peculiarities of the Spanish context, such as the strong presence of spiritism, indicate the involvement of different kinds of historical actors and legitimization processes.

2. How hypnotherapy was introduced into Spain and for who

According to Huertas García-Alejo (2012, 1995), at the end of the nineteenth century Spanish psychiatry lacked a solid theoretical basis due to a general focus on practical uses and clinical therapies. Therefore, it can be seen as typical that while Spanish psychiatrists showed limited interest in the underlying theoretical assumptions of hypnotism, they were eager to know the therapeutic effects and uses of such new medical practices. Since for Bernheim hypnosis was mainly a therapeutic instrument, his approach was more attractive to Spanish physicians than Charcot's experimental hypnotism, which accordingly was largely ignored (Diéguez Gómez, 2003).

Among Spanish psychiatrists and physicians, the main promoters of the therapeutic use of hypnosis and suggestion were: Juan Giné y Partagás³ (1836–1903), Eduardo Bertrán Rubio (1838–1909), and Abdón Sánchez Herrero (1852–1904). According to them, the introduction of hypnotherapy in Spain was a difficult task

² In contrast to spiritualism, spiritism is based on the doctrine of Allan Kardec (1804–1869), which became popular in France, Spain and South-American countries such as Brazil. Kardecists, as adherents of spiritism are known, believed in reincarnation and the plurality of the inhabited worlds. The human being is understood as a triple union between spirit, perispirit [périsprit] and body. Kardec defined the perispirit as a fluidic element that united the other two human components and that stored a person's personality and consciousness (Horta, 2004; Sharp, 2006). Moreover, spiritist doctrine combined utopian socialism with a new understanding of Christian values and morals, based on fraternity, love, solidarity and charity. According to Kardec (1924 [1864]), charity was the key to achieving a future life based on eternal happiness through progressive reincarnations. As has been pointed out by Sharp (2006), reincarnation was seen by most spiritists as an equalizer and a liberator, not related to the notion of fate or karma.

³ Catalan authors like him appear sometimes with their Catalan names, which in this case is: Joan Giné i Partagàs.

because of a series of obstacles. First, there was the scepticism of most physicians, which was fuelled by the fact that hypnotherapy was not taught at the university. Second was the proliferation of stage hypnosis and the use of hypnosis and suggestion in spiritist séances. Third was opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, whose representatives warned about the immoral character of hypnotism (González de Pablo, 2013). Already in 1888, the Roman Catholic Church in Spain had qualified hypnotizers as tricksters and declared that hypnotism was a phenomenon related to a demonic cult (Diéguez Gómez, 2003).

In what follows, we deal with the first two issues in more detail. Taking the work of the physicians mentioned above as our point of departure, we argue that hypnotherapy was neither accessible as a treatment to the general Spanish population nor as a clinical method to be learned by physicians. Moreover, we point out that despite their different approaches to hypnotism, Bertrán Rubio, Giné y Partagás, and Sánchez Herrero were in agreement in recognizing that it was necessary to legitimize hypnotherapy within medical practice. As we show, one strategy adopted to achieve that end was to condemn the amateur use of hypnosis and suggestion, especially in spiritist séances and stage hypnosis performances.

Since he was working at the university as an associate professor, Bertrán Rubio (1888) was especially concerned by the fact that hypnosis was not being taught there. In 1888, only the Marquis del Busto, from Madrid, was known for devoting a lecture to explaining the benefits of hypnotherapy as part of his course on gynaecology.⁴ As Sánchez Herrero (1889) and Giné y Partagás (1887–88) pointed out, any Spanish physician who was eager to learn about this treatment had to teach himself.

Luckily, Spanish translations of a variety of works on hypnotism were available. The titles ranged from representative works on the principles of the Nancy School, such as *Le somnambulisme provoqué* by Henri Étienne Beaunis (1886; Spanish translation, 1887), to general textbooks, such as *Magnétisme et hypnotisme* by Alexandre Cullere (1886; Spanish translation, 1887), and other works such as Albert de Rochas' (1896; Spanish translation, 1897) *L'extériorization de la motricité*.⁵ According to Bertrán Rubio (1888), the different approaches of the available works on hypnotism, together with the academic silence with regard to the topic, diminished physicians' willingness to use hypnotherapy.

Around 1890, only wealthy people could benefit from hypnotherapy in private clinical practices. Even though private clinics and asylums charged fees that were supposed to be adapted to the patient's economic possibilities, the prices were unaffordable for the working class.⁶ Sometimes the local government would cover the expenses for some patients who were unable to pay for their treatment. Private asylums were obliged to assist such patients, even though the payment from the authorities was always delayed. However, the "Nueva Belén" asylum was so prestigious that it was able to gain exemption from this obligation. Since philanthropic

work was not on the agenda of the physicians mentioned, hypnotherapy as a treatment was inaccessible for a considerable part of the population (Ausín, 2003).

At a time when Spanish psychiatry was fighting for its scientific legitimation, Giné y Partagás became the main representative of a positivist and biological (materialist) perspective. While he developed a physiologic explanation for hypnotic phenomena, Sánchez Herrero and Bertrán Rubio defined themselves as Cartesian dualists. The latter of these two postulated that a "mystery" surrounded not only hypnotism but also "the intimate essence of all psychobiological facts" (Bertrán Rubio, 1888, p. 55, italics in the original). With regard to their approach to hypnotism, Sánchez Herrero and Bertrán Rubio had always been more faithful to the teachings of the Nancy School. Giné y Partagás, in contrast, had started by following Charcot's morbid understanding of hypnosis (Ausín, 2003; Diéguez Gómez, 2003; Vall Solaz, 2006).

Despite the different approaches of these physicians towards hypnotism, they all valued the therapeutic effects of hypnosis and suggestion (Huertas García-Alejo, 1995, 2012). Therefore, in their publications they pointed out their differences respectfully in an attempt to avoid controversy.⁷ Also, they agreed that hypnotherapy had to be medically legitimized in order to become accepted by the scientific community. An initial strategy adopted to achieve this end was to condemn the popularization of hypnotism through stage hypnosis and spiritism (Bertrán Rubio, 1888; Giné y Partagás, 1887–88). Arguments and complaints of this type were emphasized at the International Medical Congress in Barcelona in September 1888, which took place at the same time as the International Exhibition. The conjunction of the two events favoured the attendance of foreign personalities, such as Joseph Grasset (1849–1918),⁸ who joined the session chaired by Giné y Partagás, entitled: "The application of hypnotism and suggestion in the treatment of neuropathies" (Anonymous, 1889; Comenge, 1888).

Coinciding with the Medical Congress, Barcelona also held the First International Spiritist Congress. Some physicians took advantage of the two congresses coinciding to denounce the spiritists' use of hypnotism. According to José López Alonso, a physician from Salamanca and friend of Sánchez Herrero, such practices should be snatched "from the claws of charlatans and necromancers" (López Alonso quoted in: Anonymous, 1889, p. 6). However, the International Medical Congress was not the first attempt to demarcate hypnotism from spiritism and stage hypnosis in Spain.

3. Stage hypnotherapy

González de Pablo (2013) recently talked about the popularity of shows of stage hypnosis in Spain at the end of the nineteenth century, which were attended by both laymen and savants. Itinerant stage mesmerists, such as Donato, Hansen or Onofrof, astonished and amused Spanish audiences with their performances. As we mention above, a typical strategy to defend medical hypnosis in Germany and Spain was to condemn stage hypnosis; in doing so, physicians hoped to limit the use of hypnosis to the medical profession (Wolffram, 2012). However, as we show, despite efforts to this effect, the first two public demonstrations of

⁴ The benefits of hypnotic suggestion to reduce pain during childbirth were widely discussed at the end of the nineteenth century at gynaecology conferences (Carlan, 1888) and medical congresses (Comenge, 1888). Furthermore, the physiologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852–1934) became interested in the field and in 1889 published a paper in which he reported a case of successful application (Durán & Alonso, 1960; López-Muñoz et al., 2008; Ramón y Cajal, 1889).

⁵ For a full chapter on the different works available on hypnotism at the beginnings of the twentieth century in Spain (both by Spanish authors and translated into Spanish) see González de Pablo (2003).

⁶ For example, Giné's asylum (Nueva Belén) had three types of rates: 36, 25 or 18 "duros" per month. At that time, the salary of a professor at the University of Barcelona was approximately 33 "duros" per month; while the average salary of a working-class man was 5 "duros" per month, that is, less than a third of the lowest rate at Nueva Belén (Ausín, 2003).

⁷ For example, Bertrán Rubio (1888) referred to Sánchez Herrero as the most outstanding authority on hypnotherapy, although he disagreed with his concern about the supposed limitations of hypnotic suggestion.

⁸ Joseph Grasset is considered to be one of the founders of neuro-psychiatry in France. Besides his publications on clinical medicine and the therapeutics of diseases of the nervous system, Grasset also published some popular works on hypnotism and spiritism, such as: *L'hypnotisme et la suggestion* (1903) and *Le spiritisme devant la science* (1904), prefaced by Pierre Janet. In fact, his understanding of these topics was highly influenced by Janetian thought (Plas, 2000).

hypnotherapy did not differ essentially from a stage hypnosis performance.

Before the International Medical Congress took place, a public demonstration of hypnotism had been held at the Army and Navy Centre in Madrid. The few physicians who attended the session were said to be scandalized (Anonymous, 1888b). In Amós Calderón's opinion, although the intention was to offer a "serious" demonstration of hypnotic phenomena, it completely failed because the Italian magnetizer Alberto Das, known as "Dr. Das", was hired to conduct the event (Calderón in: Pulido, 1888c, p. 178). Das had become very popular in Madrid after giving some private sessions at the homes of Spanish aristocrats (Anonymous, 1888f). Calderón was especially keen to differentiate hypnotism from what he considered to be its previous, "unscientific" forms. Therefore, he rejected the association maintained by Das between hypnotism and magnetism (Pulido, 1888c). According to the military physician Lorenzo Aycart (d. 1910), Das seemed to have revealed a complete lack of clinical knowledge regarding hypnotism, in contrast to experts such as Ángel Pulido (Aycart, 1888).

The next public session of hypnotherapy was intended to be different. The session was billed as constituting the first public attempt to legitimize hypnotherapy as a clinical instrument in Spain. Apart from convincing the scientific community, the aim was also to warn the population of the dangers of stage hypnotism (Pulido, 1888b, 1888c). It was organized on 10th February 1888 by three physicians from the Spanish Hygiene Society: Amós Calderón (1850–1892), Ángel Pulido (1852–1932), and Alberto Díaz de la Quintana (b. 1857). According to Bertrán Rubio (1888), they were less dedicated to hypnotherapy than Giné y Partagás or Sánchez Herrero, but still regarded as experts in the field. Calderón used hypnotherapy on a daily basis in his private clinic, Pulido had cultivated an interest in it since 1873, and Díaz de la Quintana started using hypnotic suggestion during his stay in the Philippines, when the islands were still a Spanish colony.

Opening the session, Calderón condemned stage hypnotism stating that, as a physician, he was against the use of hypnosis and suggestion as entertainment (Aycart, 1888). In the closing talk, Pulido delivered some further considerations on the therapeutic use of hypnotic suggestion. Despite their efforts to make it clear that their demonstration was different from a stage hypnosis performance, this was not the view offered by the report in the local press at all. Just as in stage hypnosis shows, a great number of curious onlookers filled the room: many aristocratic women together with a number of invited savants (Anonymous, 1888c, 1888d; Aycart, 1888). The massive attendances at this kind of event is evidence of the curiosity felt by a large part of Spanish society.

The performance lasted four hours (from 8 pm until midnight) and took place on an elevated stage, so that everyone could see it. Although the organizers made it clear that the number of people attending should be limited to those who fitted comfortably into the venue, additional people gained access using false tickets and the room ended up completely packed or even overflowing (Pulido, 1888a). According to some critical physicians, such as Aycart (1888), neither the atmosphere nor the phenomena observed differed noticeably from a stage hypnosis demonstration. Thus, in the end, the session turned out to be very similar to the previous one at the Army and Navy Centre. For this reason, Aycart (1888, p. 58), who attended both demonstrations, gave his report the headline: "Two different sessions and only one real show".

According to Aycart (1888), half of the session was devoted to demonstrating hypnotic phenomena similar to those offered previously by Das. After Calderón's condemnation of stage hypnotism, he hypnotized two of his female patients. To prove the effectiveness of hypnotic suggestion, the women were instructed to reproduce

different kinds of actions, which included suggestive hallucinations such as witnessing an apparition of the Virgin Mary. Finally, Pulido brought an extraordinary subject before the public: Carolina del Viso, a cultured upper-class woman with hysterical tendencies who Díaz de la Quintana had previously used in his demonstrations of hypnotism.⁹ Using hypnotic suggestion, the physicians made del Viso act as different animals (Aycart, 1888; Pulido, 1888d, 1888e). In Aycart's opinion, although the opening address and closing talk by Calderón and Pulido attempted to legitimize the therapeutic use of hypnotic suggestion, the cases and the procedures used were not suitable for achieving that aim. Referring to the public and the general organization of the event, Aycart wondered:

What kind of protest is this, against the functions of hypnotism, made with the help of an improvised stage around which crowded many curious onlookers who had been lucky enough to procure an entry ticket? How to demonstrate that hypnotism should be left only to doctors and to medicine, if to an exhibition of this kind of phenomena more laymen are invited than physicians, and many more ladies than gentlemen? (Aycart, 1888, p. 59).

In reaction to Aycart's critical comments, Pulido (1888a) started his defence by observing that the great number of women among the audience was a result of the fact that the conferences of the Spanish Hygiene Society were usually addressed to women, and the organizers had wanted to maintain this custom. Moreover, Pulido next pointed out that the phenomena were mainly produced to satisfy the audience's curiosity; therefore, the performance was expected to be entertaining. He argued that it was the norm for the Spanish Hygiene Society's conferences to be of a popular nature, directed towards laymen. According to Pulido, these circumstances did not allow for a thorough clinical lecture on hypnotherapy to be presented, as Aycart (1888) wanted.

Despite Pulido's efforts to justify the session, it is clear that it failed in legitimizing hypnotherapy, in the eyes of both the lay public and experts. The public ended up being entertained by the use of stage hypnotists' tricks (marvelling at extraordinary phenomena such as suggestive hallucinations), rather than receiving a warning of the dangers of hypnotism as a mere entertaining show. The physicians in attendance were not provided with any clear convincing clinical statements about the effectiveness of hypnotherapy. In this regard, Aycart's conclusions are quite revealing. After the session, he was still confident that: "hypnotic suggestion will become a very important therapeutic agent" (Aycart, 1888, p. 60), but that would clearly still have to be achieved in the future.

Finally, Aycart concluded that, if it was true, as Pulido (1888e) stated, that many Spanish physicians had become experts in hypnotherapy: "then it is sad, not to say shameful, that in Madrid none of them has been charged with organizing a special clinic similar to those that can be found in other capital cities throughout Europe" (Aycart, 1888, p. 60). As we show in the next section, soon there would be a clinic specialized in hypnotherapy in Barcelona. But it would not be the result of an initiative by the physicians mentioned so far. In fact, that enterprise was undertaken by the spiritists; a group with philanthropic and humanitarian interests, and strongly criticized by some physicians for their "dangerous" use of hypnosis and suggestion.

⁹ On 16th December 1887, Díaz de la Quintana had organized a small demonstration of hypnotism for journalists and savants in Madrid. The event took place at the editorial office of the newspaper *La Correspondencia* [The Correspondence] and was described in the press as "recreational" (Anonymous, 1887a, 1887b).

4. Hypnotherapy sponsored by the spiritists: the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic in Barcelona

In 1895, the physicians Víctor Melcior y Farré¹⁰ (1860–1929) and José Cembrano set up the *Clínica Hidro-Magnética de Caridad* [Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic]. The only procedures used at the clinic were hypnotic suggestion, practiced by Melcior, and magnetic healing, offered by Cembrano; this implies a clear distinction between hypnotism and animal magnetism (Anonymous, 1895; Melcior, 1895, 1908). The name of the clinic probably originated in this magnetic treatment, in which water was used, although in the end its most highly valued therapy was hypnosis.

The clinic was housed in a property which belonged to the Barcelona spiritist journal, the *Revista de Estudios Psicológicos* [Journal of Psychological Studies]. There, they assisted patients without charge, six days a week for three hours a day. The *Revista de Estudios Psicológicos* was the propagandistic journal of the *Centro Barcelonés de Estudios Psicológicos* [Barcelonense Centre for Psychological Studies]; the main organizer and promoter of the First International Spiritist Congress, held in Barcelona in 1888 (Anonymous, 1888a). The centre's founder was Fernández Colavida, who we mention above, in the first part of the paper. He was especially interested in the social ideals defended by spiritism, such as justice and equality. In this section we argue that, although Spanish spiritists used the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic as an instrument for propaganda, their support of the clinic also contributed to offering free access to hypnotherapy to the general public. As we show above, around 1890, hypnotherapy was only accessible to a wealthy section of Spanish society. According to Melcior (1908), when he opened the Charity Clinic, he had great difficulties gaining the trust of the public. Due to the popularity of stage hypnotism, hypnotic suggestion was seen by Spanish citizens as a means of entertainment, not as a “therapeutic weapon”, as he called it (Melcior, 1908, p. 80).

When Melcior opened the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic in 1895, he was self-taught and had little experience in hypnotic and suggestive therapy. His interest in the scientific study of psychic phenomena led him to translate *L'extériorisation de la motricité* (1896), which was published in Spain with a preface by Sánchez Herrero. Nonetheless, Melcior's work at the Charity Clinic was exclusively clinical. He developed his interest in psychical research in a different context, participating actively in the *Grupo Barcelonés de Investigaciones Psíquicas* [Barcelonense Group for Psychical Research] (Anonymous, 1895).

Despite the public's mistrust of the therapeutic use of hypnotic suggestion, the Charity Clinic would soon become a great success. Just a few days after its inauguration, a difficult case was presented to Melcior. The patient was a 23-year-old woman, who, due to a hysterical crisis, had become partially paraplegic. He hypnotized her and started using hypnotic suggestion to overcome her paralysis. According to the physician, he gave her the suggestions “with all my soul” (Melcior, 1908, p. 89).

Finally, when Melcior woke the young woman, she slowly started walking across the room. On her way out of the clinic, she stepped into the waiting room and described her recovery to other patients as a miracle. Soon, the news spread among relatives, friends and acquaintances. In May 1895, the clinic was already attending 35 patients per day. The visitors were initially “hysterical,

superstitious and ignorant people”, but soon also “physicians, soldiers, employees and some lawyers” became interested in the new cure (Melcior, 1908, p. 88). According to Melcior (1908), the number of patients grew so fast that the formation of long queues became problematic and the governor of the province sent an officer to avert public disorder. Not only did hypnotherapy become popular, but the demand for magnetic treatments, offered by Cembrano, also increased. In order to be able to magnetize more than one person at a time, Cembrano asked Medín Tallada, a spiritist and engineer, to build a magnetic baquet similar to those used by Mesmer (Anonymous, 1895).

By the end of 1895, the popularity of the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic had crossed international borders, reinforced by the propaganda published in spiritist journals, and had spread to South America and Portugal (Melcior, 1908). Melcior and Cembrano started receiving letters from countries including Costa Rica and Brazil, asking for help and containing patients' clinical histories (Ramos, 1897). While Cembrano sent magnetized papers to the enquirers, Melcior answered “using always suggestion as a therapeutic weapon, and dietetic prescriptions” (Melcior, 1908, p. 90). However, the main impact of the clinic was on Barcelona and its surrounding area. After Melcior's cure of the paralytic woman, a great number of terminal patients visited the clinic in search of the “miracles” of hypnotherapy. In 1905, after ten years of assisting patients, Melcior was exhausted and decided to close the clinic.

Over those ten years, the spiritists continued to support the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic. Even though it did not operate as a spiritist clinic, the governing board of the *Revista de Estudios Psicológicos*, who financed it, could not have been more satisfied. In their words: “every day we are more pleased to have sponsored this charitable institution, which can be considered as a practical means for promoting spiritism, maybe the most splendid that has been effected in Spain to date” (Anonymous, 1895, p. 114). Thus, despite the fact that Melcior discredited spiritist therapies (as we will see in the next section), he always received the spiritists' support. After all, the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic was not only responsible for offering hypnotherapy and magnetic treatments to the population; it was also involved in bringing non-spiritists to the centre, who often started to learn about the spiritist doctrine, since the premises also housed a public spiritist library and a public office for spiritist readings. According to Melcior (1908), the clinic saw an average of 20 patients per day over the ten years. Considering that it was open six days a week, that meant that nearly 500 patients per month visited not only the clinic, but also the spiritist centre where it was located.

Thinking of ways to promote their movement was one of the major concerns for Spanish spiritists. The First International Spiritist Congress was primarily planned to spread their doctrine (Anonymous, 1888a). Twelve years later, at the Spiritist and Spiritualist Congress in Paris, Spanish spiritists again insisted on the importance of publicity and proposed the creation of an international spiritist journal and federation (Anonymous, 1902). Due to the great number of patients who came to the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic in search of help, the centre became a useful way to promote spiritism. Melcior (1895, p. 126) pointed out that the spiritists, as well as his clinic, worked towards the progress of civilization on the basis of humanitarianism.

As part of the clinic's promotional and didactic activities, Melcior (1895) demonstrated how hypnotherapy worked by presenting cases to a large audience, mostly formed of spiritists and sceptic physicians and pharmacists. As mentioned above, Spanish physicians had no formal training and few opportunities to observe how hypnotherapy worked. Melcior's sessions differed considerably from the public demonstration organized by Pulido, Calderón and Díaz de la Quintana at the Spanish Hygiene Society. In the first

¹⁰ Although the Spanish officially have two surnames, sometimes only the first is used, especially when it is not a very common one. For example, Abdón Sánchez Herrero signed his books and articles using both surnames, since Sánchez is a very common surname in Spain. However, Víctor Melcior y Farré signed using only his first surname, and we cite him accordingly as Melcior.

place, the patients were not publicly hypnotized; they were only brought in front of the audience after their recovery, as empirical evidence of the clinical case presented to the public, and did not in any way perform or give any public demonstration. Moreover, Melcior (1895) presented the cases in clinical terms (for example, he presented a case of nasal lupus), explaining the hypnotic suggestions given to each patient and the progress that they had experienced through the sessions. Thus, this charitable clinic, sponsored by spiritists, turned out to be one of the few places where physicians could learn about the medical use of hypnosis and suggestion and see with their own eyes the results of the patients' recovery.

5. Spiritism and hypnotherapy: Melcior's "cure" of a medium

As pointed out above, Melcior developed his interest in spiritism and psychical research outside the walls of the Charity Clinic. However, there was at least one case in which the two spheres mingled: when a medium became his patient. Instead of fostering the patient's spiritist leaning, Melcior adopted a clinical approach. In this section, we examine Melcior's therapeutic use of hypnotic suggestions with Teresa Esquius. The clinical case, which was first described as spirit possession, will be instrumental in analysing how Melcior justified the use of hypnotherapy to "cure" a medium, and how this fact was received by the sponsors of his clinic: spiritists from Barcelona.

Teresa Esquius was born into a working class family in 1878 in the industrial city of Terrassa, near Barcelona. According to her parents, she had suffered from hysteric crises ever since a fight with Dolores, a dominant co-worker in the textile factory where Teresa was employed. Her father consulted tarot card readers and "healers", who told him that Teresa was a victim of the "evil eye" (in Spanish: "mal de ojo"), which is a commonly held belief that some people can harm or have a negative influence on others, especially on children, just by looking at them with envy or dislike. Concerned by his daughter's health, he threatened to kill Dolores and her husband if the effect of the "evil eye" did not disappear within three days. After that, the symptoms disappeared, but new extraordinary phenomena occurred: the furniture in Teresa's bedroom was reported to levitate and strange carvings of crosses and household objects appeared high up on the walls of a room in her home (Melcior, 1904).

According to Melcior (1904), the social environment contributed to an interpretation of Teresa's case in terms of spirit possession. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, two of the most important spiritist centres in Catalonia were located in the industrial city of Terrassa: the *Fraternidad Humana* [Human Fraternity] and the *Federación Espiritista del Vallés* [Vallés Spiritist Federation]. When the spiritist phenomena started to manifest themselves, Teresa's father consulted a spiritist, who told him that an evil spirit had possessed his daughter.

The rumour that Teresa was possessed spread quickly among the working class, provoking general excitement which would soon start to worry the local authorities. At that point the physicians Pous and Cadevall, from the Royal School of Terrassa (*Royal Colegio Terrasense*), visited Teresa's family for the first time. Although amazed by the phenomena, Pous concluded that the levitations and carvings were unconsciously produced by Teresa. After trying to cure her with a series of unspecified medical treatments, Pous suggested the use of hypnotherapy (Graus, 2014). Teresa's family could not afford to pay for treatment, so Melcior's philanthropic project must have been one of the few options available. Nevertheless, as we have shown, most patients attended the charity clinic not only because it was free, but because Melcior had achieved a considerable reputation as a hypnotherapist.

When Melcior first hypnotized Teresa, he immediately diagnosed her with a dissociation of the personality ("desdoblamiento de la personalidad", Melcior, 1904, p. 316):

They brought Teresa to my office, I hypnotized her from the first session on, and after a short while some kind of coexistence between two beings became apparent in her, the conjunction of which formed the patient's personality. Thus, while Teresa was in a somnambulistic sleep, she answered the questions not as Teresa herself, that is to say, not as the subject who in her waking state was designated by that name, but with the name Teresina. She applied that diminutive to her subconscious personality, and also to her body (Melcior, 1904, p. 306).

Melcior's understanding of Teresa's case was inspired by Pierre Janet (1859–1947) and his theory of the dissociation of the personality ("dédoublement de la personnalité", Janet, 1898 [1889]). In France, the pathologization of mediums had been reinforced by Charcot associating mediumship with hysteria (Le Maléfán, Evrard, & Alvarado, 2013). French physicians working on abnormal psychology, such as Charles Féré (1852–1907), Alfred Binet (1857–1911) and especially Janet, reinforced this type of discourse. According to Bacopoulos-Viau (2012), Janet pathologized mediumship to distance himself from spiritism. In *L'automatisme psychologique* (1898 [1889]), Janet established a relation between the dissociation of the personality, in a psychopathological sense, and spiritism. In his opinion, when the medium was in trance, a subconscious secondary personality gained control, which led to the complete dissociation of the medium's self. He concluded that autosuggestion was the mechanism of this disaggregation and that secondary personalities were fundamental in understanding alleged spiritist phenomena, such as spirit communication. The means by which secondary personalities expressed themselves—tapping, automatic writing, etc.—was of minor importance to Janet (1898 [1889]).¹¹

Just as Janet did, Melcior (1904) thought that the dissociation of the personality could only occur in individuals who were physically and psychologically unstable. According to him, Teresa suffered from both physiological and moral weakness (*misère psychologique*), to put it in Janet's terms. For Melcior, the former was caused by poor living conditions; the latter was due to Teresa's illiteracy; and both were the consequence of her belonging to the working class. In his opinion, had Teresa been better educated and more cultured, or physically stronger, she would not have suffered from this dissociation of the personality.

Unlike most spiritists, Melcior was never interested in extraordinary phenomena related to hypnosis. He discredited "the eccentricity of experimental hypnosis" and claimed to practice only "serious hypnosis, which neither looks for phenomena nor does it pay attention to them when they manifest themselves" (Melcior, 1908, p. 94). That explains why for Melcior Teresa's case was about her dissociation of the personality rather than about the extraordinary phenomena that she was said to be responsible for.

Although Melcior adopted some spiritist beliefs, such as reincarnation, he considered that the spiritist explanation of what he saw as the disaggregation of the personality "lacked a scientific basis" and was "supremely ridiculous" (Melcior, 1904, p. 262). As Edelman (2006b) shows, French spiritists fiercely fought the pathologization of mediumship that occurred in the French medical

¹¹ For more information on Janet's understanding of the dissociation of personality and the pathologization of mediumship see, for example: Bacopoulos-Viau (2012), Ellenberger (1976), Gauld (1992), Le Maléfán (1999), Le Maléfán et al. (2013) or Plas (2000).

and psychological setting. Thus, spiritist therapies were contrary to the beliefs of Charcot and Janet that mediums were hysterics and that, for that reason, they should receive the same treatments as those applied to hysterical patients (Bacopoulos-Viau, 2012; Le Maléfian, 1999). For French spiritist physicians, spiritism was not only a doctrine but also offered therapy to cure the dissociation of the personality. The treatment consisted of making the person realize that a spirit possessed them. Once they had assumed their condition as a medium, they received instruction on how to control and channel the spirits without discomfort. In this regard, it is important to mention the French spiritist physician Louis Théodore Chazaraïn, an active follower of spiritism who participated in several spiritist congresses and helped to develop spiritist therapies during the 1880's (Edelman, 2006b). According to Chazaraïn, the alliance between abnormal psychology and spiritism would represent:

...great progress for the aetiology and therapeutics of neurosis and mental diseases that have been misunderstood up to now and all too often considered incurable. As I am sure you have already guessed, I refer to certain states wrongly attributed to hysteria, to dissociations of the personality, that remain inexplicable for mainstream science, and that are none other than incarnations and possession. (Chazaraïn, 1883: s. n.)

In Spain, the pathologization of mediumship was also a big problem for spiritists. Distinguished physicians, such as Manuel Tolosa Latour (1884) and Jeroni Estrany (1908), had also defended Janet's pathological understanding of mediumship. However, Spanish spiritist physicians, such as Francesc Parés Llansó, never developed a spiritist treatment similar to that used by Chazaraïn. Although Melcior sometimes defined himself as a spiritist, he also tended to pathologize mediumship. In his words, spiritist phenomena "can never be produced by a sane person, but are always produced by a sick person afflicted by a psychological disorder" (Melcior, 1901a, p. 415). It is interesting to notice that, although many spiritists from Barcelona disapproved of Melcior's opinions of mediumship,¹² they still sponsored his Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic. Although they could have exerted pressure on Melcior to use spiritist therapies, they preferred to let him apply what he thought was best for his patients. Even in cases such as Teresa's, where the patient turned out to be a medium, Melcior would treat them with hypnotic and suggestive therapy. This shows the open-mindedness of most Spanish spiritists, who liked to consider themselves anti-dogmatic, and were not afraid of having scientists question their beliefs (see, for example: García Gonzalo, 1897).

Melcior's "cure" for Teresa consisted of a mixture of hypnotic suggestion and dietary regulation. The reasons for choosing this treatment were as follows. On the one hand, the Spanish physician was convinced that mystic visions and other extraordinary phenomena were due to privation; therefore he prescribed a healthy diet for her. On the other hand, he thought that the therapeutic use of hypnotic suggestion was especially helpful in hysteric patients, such as Teresa (Melcior, 1900, 1908). In her case, the hypnotic suggestions were used to deal with her primary symptom, that is, to banish Teresina, her secondary self. According to Melcior (1904), he started to displace Teresina by instilling in Teresa the idea that

Teresina was damaging her. Then, he repeatedly suggested the following idea: "Every time I hypnotize you, Teresina loses strength. This operation is to her what bloodletting would be to you" (Melcior, 1904, p. 309). According to Melcior (1904), after a few sessions Teresina started to disappear and, after some weeks, the levitation phenomenon and the carvings on the walls ceased. During the years that followed, Teresa was no longer disturbed by any alleged spiritist phenomena.

6. Conclusions

In the 1880s and 1890s, some Spanish psychiatrists, such as Giné y Partagás and Sánchez Herrero, were eager to extend their therapeutic tools and to include hypnosis as a psychological therapy. Nevertheless, at that time, no formal training in hypnosis was included in the medical curriculum. Spanish psychiatrists and physicians using hypnotherapy declared themselves to be self-taught (Diéguez Gómez, 2003; González de Pablo, 2013). Of course, sometimes physicians went abroad to receive training, while in Spain they could find a series of helpful translations of works on hypnotism (González de Pablo, 2003). However, it seems probable that Spanish physicians learned more of the practical side of hypnotism by witnessing the technical expertise of stage hypnosis performances than by reading the academic literature on the subject.

The historical sources leave no doubt that physicians and other scientists regularly and eagerly attended stage hypnosis shows; although some claimed to have been "scandalized" by this kind of performance. Public demonstrations, such as the one organized by Pulido, Calderón and Díaz de la Quintana for the Spanish Hygiene Society, were extremely similar to the popular circus-like performances, and aimed to marvel the audience by exhibiting powerful mental control through suggestion. However, recognizing the influence of stage hypnotists did not serve the physicians' goal of achieving exclusive authority over hypnotism by discrediting all non-clinical hypnotic practices.

In the present paper we have shown how, in the first public session of hypnotherapy, Díaz de la Quintana and Pulido induced one of his cultured, upper-class patients to behaviour like an animal. Demonstrations of this kind, especially at the hands of respected physicians, fostered the link between hypnosis and spectacle, instead of demarcating a differentiated, clinical use. The public medical session attempted to warn the public (especially the feminine sector) of the dangers of stage hypnotism and to legitimize the clinical use of hypnosis and suggestion. Nevertheless, the similarity between the session and stage hypnosis shows was the reason why the attempt at demarcation failed in the eyes of critical contemporaries, such as the military physician Lorenzo Aycart.

Surprisingly, more successful legitimization of hypnosis as a bona fide medical treatment was achieved by the spiritist project of the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic in Barcelona. That institution effectively promoted the use of hypnotherapy both among physicians as a clinical practice, and among the less privileged classes of the population as a medical treatment. As Melcior (1908) pointed out, it took a "miracle" to gain the citizens' trust for hypnotherapy; an interesting metaphor that suggests a religious (Catholic) association. In practice, that meant that he had to make a paraplegic woman walk before he acquired evidence of the therapeutic benefits of hypnotic suggestion. As we have shown in this paper, one extraordinary case was enough to spread a different appreciation of hypnotherapy. Suddenly among the local population, it started to be considered as an extremely effective (even miraculous) treatment. The arrival of numerous patients, a great part of whom had not found relief in conventional medicine, would soon overwhelm the clinic.

¹² In an article where Melcior defended the relation between mediumship and psychopathy, published in the Barcelona-based spiritist journal *Luz y Unión* [Light and Union], the editors added the following footnote: "We let our distinguished collaborator, author of the present work, take responsibility for the theory that attributes the possession of mediumistic faculties to a psychological ailment, which we believe to be mistaken" (*Luz y Unión* in: Melcior, 1901b, p. 445).

At the same time, Melcior was successful in legitimizing hypnotherapy among physicians by organizing public sessions where he displayed, in clinical terms, the recovery of some of his patients. Thus, he soon became a renowned hypnotherapist, in the eyes of lay citizens and physicians alike. Therefore, when the doctors who assisted Teresa Esquius decided to give hypnotherapy a chance, they immediately turned to Melcior. Nevertheless, it is important to note that hypnotherapy was only taken into consideration after all the other medical treatments had failed; once again, hypnosis was invoked as a “miracle” in extremis.

Spiritists in Barcelona gave Melcior free rein to use hypnosis and suggestion in the way that he considered to be best for each patient. In some cases, such as Teresa's mediumship, the treatment would even contradict the spiritist doctrine. However, spiritists still regarded the Hydro-Magnetic Charity Clinic as a practical means of promoting their cause. From a broader perspective, the humanitarian orientation of spiritism was certainly represented through a project which, according to Melcior (1908), worked towards progress and equality for society. On the whole, the Charity Clinic is a curious historical example of a symbiotic relation between medicine and spiritism: it was beneficial to both sides. By sponsoring Melcior's clinic, the spiritists fostered citizens' trust in the therapeutic benefits of hypnosis and suggestion. In that way, they contributed to the demarcation of the medical use of hypnotic suggestion as separate from its recreational usage in stage hypnosis shows.

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